

CHAPTER 20

HOUSEHOLD PATTERNS AMONG URBAN AND RURAL
COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH-EASTERN GHANA.¹

N.O. ADDO*

This paper examines household patterns among urban and rural areas in South-eastern Ghana that is Accra Capital District and the Eastern Region. Only three aspects of the subject are dealt with namely, the size of households, the composition of the households, and the types of activity among the members of the households. The study not only covers a sample of the population of the urban and rural areas in the region under review, but certain socio-economic units have also been examined. In particular, we have tried very briefly, to look at the effects of education on household formation in the sample communities covered.

The first exercise is to define the term "household". A household may be defined as "a person or group of persons who live and sleep together and eat from the same cooking pot." The essential element here is that the group have a common housekeeping arrangement. In practice this definition is very wide, and a wide variety of groups could fall within it. One essential point to note about the definition is that it does not coincide with the biological elementary family of husband wife and children, neither is it coterminous with any kind of "extended family" based upon ties of consanguinity, however defined. This definition of household has certain advantages for the statistician and the social scientist. These are:

- (i) its international usefulness; for the sake of international comparability one has to adopt one system of definition;
- (ii) its economic relevance; the group termed "household" has a common economic arrangement for maintaining its members;
- (iii) it is sociologically meaningful; all the

*Dr. Addo is a Senior Research Fellow in the Demographic Unit, Legon.

members of the household recognise one person as the head, and this person has the greater burden for seeing to the social and economic well-being of the members - including food, clothing, housing, medical fees etc.

This definition of the household was uniformly applied to the whole country. The effectiveness by which a household is identified with a house or dwelling sometimes depends on the skill and patience of the interviewer. Sometimes it is fairly easy to identify household groups in houses, for example in the social and economically superior areas of Accra such as La-Bone, Ridge, Cantonments, where each house tend to be occupied by one household. But the task is much more difficult in the overcrowded homes, and in the big houses in the city-centre, which are occupied by many households and families.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Urban households in the South-east, are on the average, smaller than rural households - 3.5 and 4.8 persons respectively². About 27% of the households living in the towns of the South-east were found to be headed by females, and these on average were larger than those households headed by males, that is 4.1 and 3.3 persons respectively. The reason for this is likely to be found largely in the kinship system. Most of the households with female heads are matrilineal households and the members of such households are likely to be drawn from a wider range of kin than those of the male-headed households. Household sizes vary slightly among the regions nevertheless, on the whole the average size of household is slightly larger in the purely traditional areas, and among the indigenous ethnic populations in towns. In other words a high degree of urbanization is likely to reduce the average size of household.

It is well known that a large proportion of migrants in the towns are single. A majority of the married ones, particularly the illiterates, also migrate to the towns without either their wives and children or their kin. For this reason, it is observed that households, are larger in the Eastern region, a more traditional area, than in the Accra Capital District, a relatively more cosmopolitan area. (See Table 1)

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE AND BY EDUCATION OF HEAD
Percentages

No. of Person's Per Household	Education of Head of Household	Survey Area				
		ACD* Urban (1966)	ER* Urban (1966)	South-east Urban (1966)	South-east Rural (1966)	Rural Danfa Survey Area (1969)
1	No Education	27.2	16.7	23.5	15.5	
2		13.4	10.6	12.5	10.8	
3 - 4		27.6	26.8	27.5	26.5	
5 - 9		26.4	35.1	29.6	38.7	
10+		5.4	10.8	6.9	8.5	
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
1	Elementary Education	26.4	26.9	26.5	17.8	
2		14.3	13.3	14.0	11.3	
3 - 4		27.8	19.9	25.5	32.5	
5 - 9		27.8	33.3	29.5	32.5	
10+		3.7	6.6	4.5	5.9	
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
1	Higher	27.0	25.0	26.5	25.9	
2		20.2	22.1	20.0	18.9	
3 - 4		20.3	19.1	20.0	27.6	
5 - 9		30.1	27.9	29.2	20.7	
10+		2.4	5.9	4.3	6.9	
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
1	All Households	26.8	20.9	25.0	16.5	14.8
2		14.6	12.3	13.9	11.2	10.8
3 - 4		26.9	23.8	25.9	28.2	17.8
5 - 9		27.4	34.0	29.5	36.3	37.5
10+		4.3	9.0	5.7	7.8	19.1
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*ACD Urban - Accra Capital District Urban Sample Areas.

ER Urban - Eastern Region Urban Sample Areas.

Source: 1966 Migration Survey of ACD and ER of Ghana

The average size of urban households appears to have increased from 1960 to 1966, particularly among the educated. In contrast, the average size of rural households appears to have declined slightly, particularly among those which had ten or more members. One could reasonably assume that, some of the members of the rural households migrated into the towns. This would lead to such a reduction in the size of the original household. The average size of households with educated heads was smaller than that of households in which the head was an illiterate. For example, 53% of the households with educated heads in ACD urban had two members, compared with 42% of the households with illiterate heads. It would appear however that, generally speaking, the few highly educated heads of the community often have to maintain larger households than those who are illiterates or those who reached the elementary school level. It is reasonable to assume that those who earn more income may be able to maintain larger households than those who earn less income (See Table 1).

At least we could think of two reasons why households headed by highly educated persons often look larger than other households. The first and probably less important reason is that often these well-educated, relatively well-paid persons can employ housemaids/gardenboys and domestic servants to join their households. The main reason however is cultural and springs from traditional attitudes regarding rights and duties among kin (See Table 2). Kinship obligations demand that a person who had climbed the social ladder, either through his education or employment and occupation, must bear additional responsibilities for supporting his younger brothers/sisters and other relatives so that the latter in turn may rise to similar positions in life in the future. But this tradition, highly educated persons are often virtually "forced" to invite their relatives to stay with them in the towns.

As a further illustration of the effects of higher education on household formation, we shall draw information from another survey conducted in three areas of Accra in 1967 (Addo & Kpedekpo, 1967). The information which is summarised in Table 3 shows that the average size of household, among the highly educated and social and economically superior community living in La-Bone, is considerably larger than the households in Nima and James Town where educational levels are relatively low. The main difference in La-Bone is brought about by the addition of a large proportion of relatives and non-

TABLE 2

HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY EDUCATION OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Size of Household (No. of Persons)	South-east Urban				South-east Rural			
	Heads Without Education		Heads with Education		Head Without Education		Heads with Education	
	1960	1966	1960	1966	1960	1966	1960	1966
1	27.4	23.5	33.4	26.4	14.0	15.5	23.9	18.6
2	16.9	12.5	16.7	15.3	12.3	10.8	12.8	12.0
3-4	17.4	27.5	24.0	24.4	24.8	26.5	24.9	32.0
5-9	24.4	29.6	23.0	29.4	37.5	38.7	31.0	31.4
10+	3.9	6.9	2.7	4.4	11.4	8.5	7.4	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 1960 PES (Unpublished data) and 1966 Migration Survey of ER and ACD of Ghana.

relatives (mainly domestic servants) to the households. One may wish to remark that the absolute size of household is not the crucial factor, but rather the resources available to maintain a given size of household. (See Table 3)

Household Composition

The composition of households in the country as a whole essentially reflects the structure of the extended family system. Most households are composed of couples living together with their children, relatives and other dependants. Only 30% and 21% of the households in ACD urban and ER urban respectively were single-person households in 1960; the corresponding figures were considerably lower in the rural area (22% and 14% respectively in ACD urban and ER urban) reflecting the relatively higher marriage rates in these areas. Children constitute the major group of dependants in households; the majority of these are the couples' own issues: few married children stayed with their parents especially in the towns. Neo-local residence is now the dominant pattern among newly-married couples. On the other hand, where a parent is found living alone without a spouse, often he or she may include his or her married children as part of the household. Parents who are divorced or widowed are most likely to accept their married children as part of their households. Of course many of these adult heads of households without spouses may also be found living with children produced out of wedlock. On the whole, a head of a household who lives alone without a spouse is more likely to shoulder greater responsibilities, financial or otherwise, towards his relatives than the one who is married. In fact the probability that this situation will arise is the reason why many young college graduates find it impossible to save whilst they still remain bachelors. For example, quite a large number of university graduates, whose basic incomes are about 7-8 times the national average, cannot save whilst they remain bachelors. They are obliged by this tradition to shoulder extended family responsibilities to a much greater degree than perhaps they could bear. Thus quite a large number of persons "earning comparatively higher wages are often in financial difficulties" (Busia, 1950: 21).

Other relatives and siblings form the next important group. The non-relatives consist not only of

T A B L E 3

HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION BY EDUCATION
OF MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD

Index	Survey Area of Accra		
	Nima	James Town	La-Bone
(i) Average size of household	5.0	4.5	6.5
(ii) % of Household members with Higher Education	5.1	7.9	37.3
(iii) % of household members related to head (excluding members of nuclear family)	M 11.8	7.4	17.3
	F 13.9	5.5	14.5
(iv) % of Household members who are non-relatives of the Head	M 4.5	2.3	3.9
	F 5.0	1.9	16.6

maids and domestic servants, but sometimes also may include children who have been sent to stay with the head of a household by the latter's friends or by someone who admires him and would therefore like his son to adopt some of his qualities and attributes.

Types of Activity of Members of Households and Dependency Status of the households

Since the large majority of the members of households were children and students, the dependency status of the households was therefore very high. We shall include in the definition of dependants all children below 15 years, all students, unemployed, full-time housewives and pensioners, old-aged and disabled persons in the household. The entire group represented about three-fifths (61.6%) of the total household membership in South-eastern urban. The dependency status of households was lower in the rural areas (55.3%) of the South-east. On the whole most of the adult members of the households were employed in one way or the other. The employment rate was especially high among the heads of households, 87% and 94% respectively in the towns and rural areas. The vast majority of the children were students in the towns as well as in rural areas. On the other hand in the rural areas twice as many of the head of household's own children aged above 15 years were working as compared with those in the towns. The majority of the relative, brothers' and sisters' on the other hand were found to be doing some work. Even among the non-relatives, nearly two-fifths were found to be either students or below the age of 15 years. The vast majority of housewives were found to be working, particularly in the rural areas. This emphasises that married women contribute substantially in various ways towards the household budget. The dependency burden on male heads of household is thereby reduced to some extent.

We shall go into some details to examine whether any association exists between household size and the dependency status of the households. The figures in Table 7 reveal throughout that the larger the size of the household the higher the proportion of children below 5 years, and also below 15 years. Conversely there are proportionately fewer adults in the larger households as compared with the small-size households. The level of dependency in the households also has some association with the level of education reached by the head of the household. Thus the proportion of dependent children below 5 years and below 15 years decreases as the level of education of the head

T A B L E 4
 RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD
 (%=100)

Sample Area	Relationship to Head								
	Head	Wife	Child	Brother/ Sister	Mother/ Father	Brother's Child	Sister's Child	Other rela- tives	Non- Rela- tives
South-east Urban	24.5	10.4	41.2	5.7	0.3	1.2	2.1	10.2	4.4
South-east Rural	21.4	9.2	42.8	3.9	0.3	0.8	2.1	16.6	2.9

Source: 1966 Migration Survey of ER and ACD of Ghana

of household increases. This situation is found to exist irrespective of the size of the household. On the other hand the proportion of students in the households with highly educated heads was much greater than in the households where the head was an illiterate or received a lower education. Apart from the fact that the highly educated send all their children to school, other relatives, who for various reasons could not afford to educate their own children, send them to these highly educated relatives in order to receive their education and training. Also some of the women married to highly educated heads of households remain full-time housewives thus adding to the dependency status of such households.

The level of dependency in general is higher in the towns of the ER than in the towns of the ACD, but fewer of the households members in the former area were students than in the ACD urban. Indeed the total number of dependants for heads of households who received higher education is likely to increase more than proportionately as the household increases in size as compared with the situation where the head was an illiterate or where he reached middle school level.

These associations look interesting and indeed indicate that there are various processes at work which influence the patterns of household formation in the country. These include not only economic factors but also social, educational and psychological factors, kinship obligations, the level of aspirations among heads of households, and even the amount of respect which a head of household commands from his neighbours and friends. It is equally important to note that not all dependants at any given point are physically present in the same household where the bread winner stays; some of these may be living elsewhere. For example, a number of migrant workers in town often leave their families and other dependants in their hometowns and villages and pay them visits. In a survey of Pre-school children it was observed that some of the dependants of the heads of households lived outside the household (Kpedekpo & Addo, 1968). Thus 28%, 39.7% and 34% respectively of all dependants supported by the heads of households in Nima, James Town and La-Bone resided outside the household.

TABLE 5A

HOUSEHOLD PATTERNS AMONG THE POPULATION 15+

Region/Area	All Household	Single	Couple	Household consisting of couples only						
				All Households	Without Children	With Unmarried Children	Also with Married Children	Also with Sisters brothers	Also with Parents	Also with distant relatives
ACD Urban	100.0	30.2	69.8	100.0	18.6	51.8	5.0	22.4	3.2	1.0
ACD Rural	100.0	22.1	77.9	100.0	13.3	51.8	10.4	20.0	4.3	0.2
ER Urban	100.0	21.3	78.7	100.0	10.8	49.3	6.4	28.0	3.3	1.3
ER Rural	100.0	13.6	86.4	100.0	7.3	47.4	13.2	26.9	4.2	1.0

Source: 1960 Post - Enumeration Survey (Unpublished data)

T A B L E 5B

HOUSEHOLD PATTERN AMONG HEADS WITHOUT SPOUSES

Percentages

	All Household	With Unmarried Children	Also with Married Children	Also with Sisters/ Brothers	Also with Parents: their brothers etc.	Also with distant relative guests
ACD Urban	100.0	31.3	14.5	35.8	8.8	9.6
ACD Rural	100.0	24.1	25.7	30.6	13.0	6.6
ER Urban	100.0	25.5	22.5	34.8	5.2	12.0
ER Rural	100.0	24.9	25.9	37.1	7.0	5.3

Source: 1960 PES, (Unpublished data)

TABLE 6 (a)

EMPLOYMENT AND DEPENDENCY STATUS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY
RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Region	Employment and Dependency Status	Relationship to Head									
		All Members	Head	Wife	Child	Brother/ Sister	Mother Father	Brother's Child	Sister's Child	Other Rela- tives	Non Rela- tives
South- East Urban	Proportion of Household Group:										
	(a) Working	38.4	87.2	51.9	10.2	60.6	38.9	17.6	21.5	12.5	46.9
	(b) Dependants*	61.6	12.8	48.1	89.8	39.4	61.1	82.4	78.5	87.5	53.1
South- East Rural	(a) Working	44.7	93.6	71.6	22.5	60.3	61.3	17.9	20.4	6.1	43.8
	(b) Dependants*	55.3	6.4	28.4	77.5	39.7	38.7	82.1	79.6	93.9	56.2

* DEPENDANTS REFER TO ANY PERSON WHO WAS NOT WORKING AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEY. SOURCE: 1966 MIGRATION SURVEY OF ER AND ACD OF GHANA.

TABLE 6 (b)

TYPES OF ACTIVITY BY RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Type of Activity	ACD + ER URBAN									
	Relationship to Head of Household									
	All Members	Head	Wife	Child	Brother/Sister	Mother/Father	Brother's Child	Sister's Child	Other Relatives	Non-Relatives
Under 15	26.3	-	-	47.3	5.7	-	37.2	31.6	44.5	18.8
Student	23.1	0.8	0.2	37.8	20.7	-	38.7	37.3	37.9	23.6
Working	38.4	87.2	51.9	10.2	60.6	38.9	17.6	21.5	12.5	46.9
Unemployed	2.9	4.0	1.1	2.2	6.5	9.3	2.5	4.6	1.8	3.3
Housewife	5.9	2.9	42.4	1.1	1.7	9.3	-	1.1	0.9	3.2
Pensioner/Old	1.3	2.7	3.5	-	1.8	35.1	-	-	0.3	.2
Age/Disabled	2.1	2.4	1.9	1.4	2.9	7.4	3.5	3.8	1.8	4.0
Not Stated	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Totals	17254	4224	1788	7114	993	54	199	367	1758	757
N										
Type of Activity	ACD + ER RURAL									
	Relationship to Head of Household									
	All Members	Head	Wife	Child	Brother/Sister	Mother/Father	Brother's Child	Sister's Child	Other Relatives	Non-Relatives
Under 15	21.1	-	-	31.5	3.2	-	28.6	21.9	45.9	16.7
Student	27.1	0.5	0.1	41.7	26.0	-	46.4	48.8	45.6	28.7
Working	44.7	93.6	71.6	22.5	60.3	61.3	17.9	20.4	6.1	43.8
Unemployed	2.1	1.3	0.3	2.6	4.5	-	4.8	7.0	1.7	2.7
Housewife	3.8	1.7	27.0	1.4	4.4	3.2	0.7	2.0	0.4	5.9
Pensioner/Old	1.2	2.9	1.0	0.2	1.6	35.5	0.6	-	0.3	2.0
Age/Disabled	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not Stated	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Totals	10258	2067	884	4128	375	31	84	201	1600	285
N										

TABLE 7

SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD BY DISTRIBUTION OF
POPULATION BY AGE

Size of Household	Percentage distribution of Population by whether children or adults											
	Below 5 years				Below 15 years				Adults 15 years +			
	(a) %	(b) %	(c) %	(d)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
2 - 4	21.9	25.6	27.8	34.5	32.8	38.9	40.2	40.9	67.2	61.1	59.8	59.1
5 - 9	23.3	28.7	35.1	37.8	51.6	54.4	49.7	62.1	48.4	45.6	40.3	37.9
10+	21.7	30.1	36.4	38.1	52.8	56.3	66.5	68.3	47.2	43.7	33.5	31.7

% Source: (a) 1966 Migration Survey - Accra Capital District Urban
 (b) " " " - Eastern Region Urban
 (c) " " " - South-east Rural
 (d) Danfa Rural Demographic Survey (1969)

T A B L E 8

DISTRIBUTION OF DEPENDANTS BY WHETHER RESIDENT IN
HOUSEHOLD OR OUTSIDE

Dependency Status	Proportion of dependants living in or outside household					
	Nima		James Town		La-Bone	
	Inside	Outside	Inside	Outside	Inside	Outside
Wife/Wives	24.3	11.4	16.7	5.4	15.0	4.4
Children	62.2	45.5	61.0	40.0	64.5	41.9
Other Relatives	11.6	36.6	14.8	46.6	13.8	51.2
Non-Relatives	1.9	6.5	7.5	8.0	6.7	2.5
N	831	325	508	335	918	475

NOTES

1. The substance of this paper was first presented at a symposium on Family Planning and the Implications of Demographic Trends in West Africa, organized by the Demographic Unit Dept. of Sociology, Legon, from April 23-25, 1970.
2. The information was obtained from the 1966 Migration Survey of the Eastern Region and Accra Capital District, which was conducted by the author as part of his studies on migration and urban growth in Ghana.

REFERENCES

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|--|
| Addo N.O. & Kpedekpo
G.M.K. | 1967 | <u>A Survey of Housing and Household Conditions in La-Bone, Nima and James Town of Accra.</u> (Unpublished Monograph). Community Health Reports, Project I. (Project by the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Ghana Medical School). |
| Busia K.A. | 1950 | <u>Report on a Social Survey of Sekondi Takoradi.</u> Accra. Government Printer. |
| Kpedekpo G.M.K. & Addo
N.O. | 1968 | <u>A Survey of Pre-School Children in La-Bone, Nima and James Town of Accra.</u> (Unpublished monograph). Community Health Report Project II. (Project by Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, Ghana Medical School.) |



This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 4.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>